

Additional information on the Rock Pratincole *Glareola nuchalis* in Togo

by Robert A. Cheke

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In a previous note (Cheke 1980) I described observations made in 1979 at a small colony of the Rock Pratincole *Glareola nuchalis liberiae* at Landa-Pozanda (9° 31' N, 1° 17' E) on the Kara river in Togo. In 1979 I was unable to locate a nest or to confirm whether any of the population were migrants. During May to July 1980 and August to December 1981 I made further observations at the same colony and include here information on a nest found in 1980 and on the birds' movements.

On 16 May 1980, 6 birds were present and by 1 June it was clear from their behaviour that they were separated into pairs, occupying territories which were in the same positions as those tenured in the previous year. One of these was an expanse of rock, whereon I found an egg on a ledge sheltered by overhanging stone. The nest site and egg were typical for the species (Bannerman 1953, Mackworth-Praed & Grant 1970), the egg having a buff background mostly obscured by very dark brown, almost black, blotches interspersed with rich brown freckles and measuring 28 x 21 mm.

Paired birds were again seen to perform the greeting displays described in my earlier note and sometimes held their collars flared, revealing the maximum expanse of chestnut feathering, for as long as 20 seconds. Some birds continued this display, with their collars remaining flared, by bobbing their heads up and down and keeping their bills opened slightly.

On 14 June an additional adult bird had appeared, but the egg had vanished and there were no signs of any young. Neither were there any young birds visible on 21 June when all 3 pairs were in their usual positions; yet on 15 July 7 adults and 2 well-grown juveniles, almost as large as the adults, were present. By this time the river had risen substantially and the nest site was submerged. Two days later the young birds were seen flying and they were still present on 24 July.

From June to mid-August 1981 about 6 birds were again present (Dr. S. E. O. Meredith) but on 25 August I was surprised to count 23. Of these, 21 were together in a single flock, only one of whose members was distinguished as a juvenile. On 5 September, 3 adults remained and a single adult alone was present during visits on 11, 24 and 31 October. This latter individual had an entirely white nuchal collar and so was ascribed to the eastern race *G. n. nuchalis*, which has not previously been recorded so far west. Benson & Irwin (1965) suggested that any records of *G. n. nuchalis* within the range of *G. n. liberiae* would represent off-season movements and Snow (1978) states that both subspecies have been collected together in Cameroon. No Rock Pratincoles of either race were present on 29 November.

The occurrence of the flock of *G. n. liberiae* in late August followed by their departure, and at least 2 months absence, strongly suggests that the birds are migratory, although their winter quarters remain unknown. The only winter record I have is of one bird on 28 November 1981 on the Mono river, a few kilometres north of Tetetou (7° 1' N, 1° 30' E) in Togo, close to where Dekeyser (1951) recorded a pair on 22 May 1950.

References:

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- Cheke, R. A. 1980. A small breeding colony of the Rock Pratincole *Glareola nuchalis liberiae* in Togo. *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 100: 175-178.
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- Mackworth-Praed, C. W. & Grant, C. H. B. 1970. *African Handbook of Birds*. Series 3. Birds of West Central and Western Africa. Vol. 1. Longmans: London.
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BOOKS RECEIVED

Schmidl, D. 1982. *The Birds of the Serengeti National Park, Tanzania*. Pp. 132. 8 habitat photographs, maps. British Ornithologists' Union, c/o The Zoological Society, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY. £11 (£10 to BOU members during 1982).

The fifth in the series of annotated avifaunal lists being published by the BOU. Over 500 species are assessed for status, habitat, breeding, distribution and movements. The introductory sections cover the history, geography, geology, climate, vegetation and habitats of the Park, as well as breeding seasons and migration. There is a comprehensive bibliography and the indices cover scientific and English names.

Watling, Dick. 1982. *Birds of Fiji, Tonga and Samoa*. Pp. 176. Many photographs in colour; illustrated in black-and-white and colour by Chloe Talbot-Kelly. Millwood Press: Wellington, N.Z. £25. (Distributed in U.K. by Croom Helm Ltd., St. John's Road, London.)

The extravagance and price of this excellently produced book should not be allowed to disguise the fact that it is a comprehensive review of the avifauna of 3 well known islands, explored for 14 years by the author, a committed conservationist, most especially in an area where conservation is paramount, if for no other reason than that 56% of its land birds are endemic, 10 of the species being in endemic genera or subgenera. The photographic illustrations are lavish, especially of the Fiji region, and sometimes dramatic. The paintings, drawings and silhouettes are both decorative and helpful for identification, though most birds, even the doves, look startled or severe.

There are good maps and sections on the ornithological history, composition of the avifauna, and brief discussion of ecological isolation, breeding and moult, and conservation. The systematic list is divided into Land and Sea Birds, distribution maps being provided for the former in most cases. The text gives features of identification, flight, voice, food, breeding, habitat and range and allied species. There is a full bibliography and much research has gone into providing vernacular names of all the birds. The whole is a successful, unassumingly written account of an intriguing avifauna and will be invaluable for anyone visiting or researching the three islands, though regrettably at A4 size it is unsuitable for use in the field.